

manufacturing has been the backbone of our economy and of our communities, but during the past decade, we've seen many of our jobs being shipped overseas, not because we are not hardworking and not because we are not producing high-quality products but, rather, because of unfair and unbalanced trade deals.

The free enterprise system depends upon working Americans having a competitive workforce and productive employees. These are vital to the success of every business be it large or small.

Congress will soon vote on an economic stimulus package that contains \$500 million for worker and job training assistance. Included in that legislation is a piece that I had the opportunity to write, entitled the "Incumbent Worker Development Act." This legislation will guarantee that States and Federal Governments work together to train our workers.

This is not a time for ideology. This is a time for action, and I encourage all of us to vote for this stimulus package.

REPUBLICANS CLAIM THEY WANT ALL OF THE ABOVE BUT HAVE DONE NOTHING TO LOWER GAS PRICES

(Mr. SIREs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, both Democrats and Republicans have been talking about high gas prices for months. At first, Republicans said we just needed to drill, drill, drill, but then they joined us in saying that a more comprehensive, all-of-the-above proposal was in order. It turns out it was just all talk.

Democrats have been trying to reverse the failed Bush policies of the past, but Republicans keep saying no. We proposed legislation to crack down on price gouging and to curb excess speculation. Republicans said no. We proposed lowering gas prices immediately by tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Republicans said no. We proposed legislation that would force Big Oil to drill on 68 million acres of land to increase oil production here at home. Republicans again said no.

Yesterday, we passed an all-of-the-above energy package to bring down prices and to invest in America's energy future, but again, Republicans voted no.

Mr. Speaker, it seems like Republicans don't actually want to resolve the crisis. They just want to talk about the crisis.

REPUBLICANS ARE STILL JUST TALKING

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, for 6 years, the Republicans had control of Congress and of the White House, and for 6 years, the American people waited

for them to do something to end our dependence on foreign oil, but despite their constant cry of "drill, baby, drill," the Republicans didn't act on this issue when they had control, and 2 years ago, the American people voted for new leadership in Congress.

Well, yesterday, that new leadership—the Democrats in this House—answered the call by passing a landmark energy bill that triples the available territory for offshore drilling. Let me repeat that. The bill we passed yesterday triples the amount of territory in the Outer Continental Shelf that is available for drilling.

Predictably, many in the minority demonstrated by their votes that they're more interested in having a political issue for the coming election than they are in actually solving the problem. While Democrats have taken decisive action by passing a comprehensive energy bill that includes an unprecedented expansion of offshore drilling, Republicans, as you will hear today, are still just talking.

MCCAIN'S ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMY SHOWS THAT HE REALLY IS NOT AN EXPERT ON THE ECONOMY

(Mr. COURTNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in December, Senator MCCAIN admitted that he is not an economic expert when he stated "The issue of economics is not something I've understood as well as I should." He went on to say, though, that he had Alan Greenspan's book. Well, clearly, Senator MCCAIN should listen to Greenspan, who called this week's financial news a once-in-a-century type of financial crisis. Unfortunately, Senator MCCAIN was not listening because his response to the catastrophic economic events of this week was "the fundamentals of our economy are strong," and he called for the oldest, lamest Washington trick in the book—the creation of a study commission.

We don't need a commission to know that 600,000 Americans have lost their jobs in the last year, that the median income for working Americans has fallen over \$2,000 a year over the last 8 years. Those are not strong fundamentals.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when every economic expert agrees that our economy is in crisis, we need someone in the White House who is ready and willing to act now to fix it, and clearly, that person is not Senator MCCAIN.

IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE IN THE POLICIES OF THIS NATION

(Mr. PERLMUTTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, this country was really founded upon

sacrifice, investment and opportunity for all, but over the last few years, we've seen the focus being on the wealthiest 1 percent in America to the exclusion of the rest of us, and that House of cards has come tumbling down on Wall Street over the last couple of weeks with the failures of the biggest corporations in America.

The policies of this administration not to regulate and the policies to only borrow and spend are causing this country turmoil, and the hardworking people in the middle are going to have to pick up the pieces. It is time for renewal. It is time for a change. The policies of the Democrats and of BARACK OBAMA are going to change the direction of this Nation and make it stronger and make it the Nation that it can be.

THE TROUBLED STATE OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, the last few days have clearly demonstrated that the troubled state that our economy is in is more serious than we thought. The Bush administration's mismanagement of the American economy has officially caused a housing crisis to snowball and jeopardize the entire economy.

Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch, established companies that survived the Great Depression, have declared bankruptcy or have been sold off to survive. Both companies employ thousands of people from my district, the 19th District of New York, and no one seems to know what will happen to these workers or to their families.

But it's not just Wall Street suffering. Wages have stagnated; expenses continue to rise. American families can no longer afford to buy necessities, much less to invest in the future.

Mr. Speaker, when President Bush took office 8 years ago, he inherited a flourishing economy and a record budget surplus. Now, as he leaves office 8 years later with 8 years of misrule and a lack of oversight, those days are clearly gone.

I hope we make the right choice for our next President and elect BARACK OBAMA, who will understand how to deal with the complexities of our economic situation.

PASSING A COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY BILL

(Mr. WELCH of Vermont asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House of Representatives passed a comprehensive energy bill, regrettably with almost undivided Republican opposition. That was disappointing because we had a chance to